

## Performance Reviews

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During **Performance Management 1**, you learned how to develop an effective performance plan that you can use to document what you expect your employees to do, and how well you expect them to perform. Now we are going to focus on the all-important aspect of communicating the performance plan to your employees and appraising their performance against it. In this lesson we will focus on:

- Communicating clear performance expectations
- Providing specific, objective, and job-related performance feedback
- Effectively documenting employee performance
- Conducting effective progress reviews and end-of-year appraisals



I'm Wormy, and I am here to help you through this training program. If you click on my apple, I will share key points from the lesson. Click on the apple again, and I'll go away.

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### Objectives

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This course provides you with important information you will need to review and improve employee performance, and conduct effective mid-year reviews and annual performance appraisals. Upon completion of this course, you should be able to:

- Recognize the supervisor's responsibilities for performance reviews.
- Identify the benefits of employee input as you develop their performance reviews.
- Recognize characteristics of effective feedback to employees.
- Select the four steps for providing effective feedback to employees on their performance.
- Recognize the importance of documentation during the appraisal period.
- Identify kinds of documentation to keep.
- Identify what a supervisor should cover when conducting a mid-year review.
- Recognize the actions a supervisor may take when dealing with performance problems.
- Choose the steps a supervisor should take when preparing for and presenting an annual review.
- Identify coping skills when faced with negative reactions to an employee review.
- Recognize common errors supervisors make when conducting performance reviews.

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### Supervisor Responsibilities

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#### Difficulties in Reviewing Performance

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Reviewing performance with employees is one of the most important yet difficult tasks a supervisor performs. This is because supervisors:

- Feel they are passing judgment on the people who work for them
- Feel they have insufficient or incomplete information to give an accurate rating
- Recognize that the whole performance review process is at least somewhat subjective and more of an art than a science
- Know that it is difficult and that there are no "ten easy steps to judgment-free performance appraisals"
- Never have enough time to do the process complete justice
- Often find it difficult to communicate effectively with their employees
- Recognize the importance of performance management



Continuous feedback  
throughout the rating period  
makes reviewing performance  
easier.

## **Feel They are Passing Judgment**

Passing judgment is one of the requirements of any supervisory or managerial position. It's one of the reasons that they usually are higher graded and paid more than their employees.

## **Feel They have Insufficient or Incomplete Information**

Obviously employees know more about their performance than their supervisors. That's why it is good to have them provide their assessment of their performance prior to committing to a rating. It is also wise to seek input from peers, customers, and others who observe the employee before deciding on appraisal ratings.

## **Recognize the Whole Performance Review Process**

In most cases, the performance appraisal process cannot be totally objective. It is important to make it as objective as possible, and then communicate the subjective part as clearly as possible using good examples and non-examples. Keeping good records is one way of adding objectivity.

## **Know that it is Difficult**

Most employees know that the process is difficult as well. What they really want is to be fairly and equitably appraised, given clear steps to improve, and rewarded appropriately for their hard work.

## **Never have Enough Time**

Waiting until the last minute before completing appraisals only compounds the issue. It is important for supervisors to recognize the importance and value of performance management and to place high emphasis on it.

## **Often Find it Difficult to Communicate Effectively**

Communication always tops the list of reasons why organizations have problems. It is something that all of us should strive to improve.

## **Recognize the Importance of Performance Management**

Good supervisors recognize that their primary responsibility is using their employees effectively to perform the mission of their units. That means that they recognize that there is a lot riding on performance management and make it a high priority.

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### Supervisor Responsibilities

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### Communication Responsibilities

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There are **three** major communication responsibilities for supervisors during the performance appraisal process. They are:

- **Performance planning** - Defining performance elements developed at the beginning of the each performance rating cycle and communicating those elements to your employees.
- **Progress Reviews** - Informing employees of how their performance relates to their standards whenever an opportunity presents itself and formally during the progress review.
- **Annual performance appraisals** - Conducting the final performance evaluation at the end of the appraisal period.

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### Supervisor Responsibilities

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Read the following question or statement, and respond by selecting one or more options. When you're through, click the submit button to score the question.

#### When should the manager provide a progress review?

- ☒ A. Whenever an opportunity presents itself
- ☐ B. At the beginning of each performance rating cycle
- ☒ C. Formally during the progress review
- ☐ D. At the end of the appraisal period

Correct.

**Submit**

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Read the following question or statement, and respond by selecting one option. When you're through, click the submit button to score the question.

**When should the manager define performance elements developed at the beginning of each performance rating cycle and communicate those elements to your employees?**

- ☒ A. During performance planning
- ☐ B. During performance updates
- ☐ C. During annual performance appraisals.

Correct.

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### Supervisor Responsibilities

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The Supervisor's Responsibility section includes providing feedback to employees as a means to demonstrate how their behavior or performance affects other individuals or the organization. The **three** major communication responsibilities for supervisors during the performance appraisal process are:

- Performance planning
- Progress reviews
- Annual performance appraisal



Communication is key to  
effective performance  
management.



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### Employee Input

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#### Hints for the Supervisor

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No one knows more about his or her work than the person doing it. We strongly encourage you to observe, listen, and talk with your employees about their work as you develop their performance plans.

These hints will help you:

1. Build a level of trust with your employees. Allow employees to ask questions and discuss their concerns. In meetings (public or private), and as you delegate assignments, always allow them to ask questions. Also, in passing, ask them from time to time if they have questions.
2. Listen to your employees. If you listen to them, you will find out so much about what they do, what they like to do, what they hate to do, if what they do is valued etc.
3. Talk to the employee about his or her role in the organization and discuss expectations. Establish goals that are clearly defined.
4. Keep lines of communication open and constructive.
5. Set a good example. The manner in which you conduct yourself is critical in the performance of their jobs.
6. Since an exceptional rating is going to be a rare thing, be sure to recognize exceptional work.
7. Define for your employees what work they are performing is critical to the organization.



Being a good listener is one of the greatest skills a manager can develop.



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### Employee Input

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Read the following question or statement, and respond by selecting one or more options. When you're through, click the submit button to score the question.

#### Why should supervisors allow employees to ask questions?

- ☒ To find out what work is critical to the organization
- ☒ To help employees better understand their jobs
- ☒ To find out what employees are truly doing

Correct.

**Submit**

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In the Employee Input section, you learned that during performance review development, employee input is beneficial because:

- No one knows more about his or her work than the ones doing it.
- Employees responses to your questions will help you write standards that are relevant, understandable and measureable.
- Talking to employees about their role in the organization and discussing expectations helps clarify what they should be doing.

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### Performance Feedback

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#### Characteristics of Effective Feedback

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Performance appraisal experts agree that quality feedback is the most important aspect of successful performance management. Effective performance appraisal feedback is:

- **Timely** - Give feedback as close to the event as possible; do **not** save it for the next formal performance appraisal discussion. By that time the employee may have completely forgotten about the event.
- **Specific** - Discuss specific behaviors as they relate to the performance standards, and avoid speaking in generalities.
- **Constructive/considerate** - Provide feedback, even if it is negative, in a positive, constructive manner. View it as a problem-solving opportunity for both you and the employee.
- **Objective** - Focus on what actually occurred, **not** your views or philosophy on what took place.
- **Future-oriented** - Focus on how to continue the behavior, if positive, or how to make sure it does **not** occur again, if negative.
- **Ongoing** - Provide frequent feedback, **not** merely at the time of the mid-year review or annual appraisal.



Make feedback  
positive and  
constructive.

## Performance Reviews

### Performance Feedback

#### Four Step Process for Effective Feedback

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We recommend a four-step process for providing quality feedback to employees on their performance. This process is applicable whether you are providing positive or negative feedback. It is important to reinforce positive behavior so that it is repeated and eliminate negative behavior before it leads to serious performance problems.

**Step One** - Describe the specific behavior to be praised or corrected.

**Step Two** - Inform the employee of the effect of his or her behavior on the work unit, the agency, or other people such as co-workers or customers.

**Step Three** - Make sure the employee understands what you are saying and why it is important by asking him or her for a response.

**Step Four** - If the behavior needs improvement, ask the employee how it could be improved. By asking the employee for ideas, you are placing ownership of the situation on the employee. If the behavior was positive, you may wish to skip this step or ask the employee how the behavior can be reinforced.



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Read the following question or statement, and respond by selecting one option. When you're through, click the submit button to score the question.

**The last step in the process for providing effective feedback places ownership of the situation on the employee. How is this best accomplished**

- ☐ A. Describe the behavior to be improved
- ☐ B. Inform the employee of his or her effect on the work unit
- ☐ C. Ask the employee for a response to ensure understanding
- ☒ D. Ask the employee for ideas on how to improve the situation

Correct.

**Submit**

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## Case Study

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In the following incident, describe the appropriate response of the supervisor using the four-step approach to providing quality feedback.

The employee was part of the information technology department of a medium-sized federal agency. Employees of one office in the organization were having difficulty getting some new software to work correctly. That office asked the IT department for some assistance, and the supervisor asked her employee to provide assistance "at the earliest possible time, making it a priority." A week went by, and the office called the supervisor and indicated that no one had yet contacted them about any assistance with their problem. Neither that office nor the supervisor believed that that was acceptable.

The four steps are:

1. Describe the specific behavior to be praised or corrected.
2. Inform the employee of the effect of his or her behavior.
3. Check for the employee's understanding of the issue.
4. Ask the employee how the behavior could be improved or reinforced

Read the following question or statement, and respond by selecting one option. When you're through, click the submit button to score the question.

**Which of the following is a good example of what should take place under Step 1?**

- ☐ A. Do you understand how this impacts our customers?
- ☒ B. A week has gone by and you have not contacted the customer about providing assistance. While I know that you have other work to do, that simply was not timely service to our customers.
- ☐ C. Do you have any suggestions about how we might avoid this situation in the future?

Correct.

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Quality feedback is the most important aspect of successful performance management. In order to be effective, performance appraisal feedback should be:

- Timely
- Specific
- Constructive/considerate
- Objective
- Future oriented
- Ongoing

Whether you are providing positive or negative feedback, the four-step process for providing quality feedback to employees is recommended. The four steps are:

1. Describe the specific behavior to be praised or corrected.
2. Inform the employee of the effect of his or her behavior.
3. Check for the employee's understanding of the issue.
4. Ask the employee how the behavior could be improved or reinforced.





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### Documenting Performance

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#### Purpose of Documenting Performance

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It is extremely important for supervisors to document or keep notes of positive and negative examples of performance for each employee they supervise during the appraisal period for the following reasons:

- Supervisors cannot remember everything over the course of a year.
- These notes are an aid to improving performance when coupled with feedback to the employee.
- Documentation serves as an important tool for the progress review and annual performance appraisal.
- Documentation provides evidence if the rating is challenged by the employee. If appealed to an arbitrator or to the Merit Systems Protection Board (MSPB), the hearing official will ask the supervisor to produce documentation that justifies the rating.

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### Documenting Performance

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#### Kinds of Documentation


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There are a number of ways for supervisors to keep records or notes on their employees. They may choose to:

- **Record everything** - This is **not** very practical unless you receive reports with information on employee productivity.
- **Use sampling** - Make sure these are representative samples and **not** merely sampling at bizarre times.
- **Use records and reports that already exist** - These are good to use as long as they record individual and not group performance.
- **Note important incidents throughout the year** - Supervisors need to ensure that they are recording typical performance incidents for each employee. Making a notation on your calendar is a good method of recording incidents.
- **Place documentation in a separate folder** - Place notes in a folder to serve as "memory joggers" for later use. Keep one folder for the entire unit rather than a separate folder for each employee. Keeping a folder for each employee might qualify as a system of records and be in violation of the Privacy Act.
- **Seek valid input of others on how employees are performing** - Input can come from customers, peers, internal clients, and external clients.

**Remember:** Some collective bargaining agreements require supervisors to share any documentation or notes immediately with their employees. Supervisors should know what the union contract states about this issue.



Documenting performance  
makes the reviewing  
process easier.

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### Documenting Performance

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Read the following question or statement, and respond by selecting one or more options. When you're through, click the submit button to score the question.

**Why is it important for supervisors to document or keep notes of positive and negative examples of performance for each employee they supervise?**

- ☒ Supervisors cannot remember everything over the course of a year
- ☒ Documentation serves as an important rating tool for the mid-year review and annual performance appraisal
- ☒ Documentation provides evidence if the rating is challenged by the employee
- ☒ Documentation can be used as proof during the mid-year review and annual performance appraisal

Correct.

**Submit**

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### Documenting Performance

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Read the following question or statement, and respond by selecting one or more options. When you're through, click the submit button to score the question.

**Where can valid input come from on how an employee is performing?**

- ☒ Customers
- ☒ Peers
- ☒ Internal clients
- ☒ External clients

Correct.

**Submit**

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Documenting both positive and negative performance of employees during the appraisal period is important because:

- It helps the supervisor remember specific events
- Documentation serves as an important tool for the mid-year review and annual performance appraisal
- Documentation provides evidence if the rating is challenged by the employee

Input can come from many different sources, such as customers, peers, internal clients, and external clients.

Remember to keep one folder for the entire unit rather than a separate folder for each employee. Keeping a separate folder for each employee may be in violation of the Privacy Act.



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### Conducting a Progress Review

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There should be continuous feedback between the employee and his/her supervisor. At a minimum, one formal, progress review shall be held between the supervisor and the employee, at approximately midpoint in the rating cycle. Ratings are not assigned for progress reviews. A written narrative is not required, unless performance is less than Fully Successful. Along with providing an interim assessment of performance, this provides an opportunity for supervisors to discuss and document evolving priorities or other organizational changes impacting employee work assignments. The supervisor will:

- Discuss and, as appropriate, document areas needing improvement.
- Discuss with the employee and document any changes to performance goals that may be necessitated by such factors as new program requirements, changes in resource levels, etc.
- Consider any guidance provided by the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Administration and Management (ASAM) and/or the OPDIV Head.
- Obtain employee performance feedback from other agency managers and staff, when appropriate. Examples of when obtaining feedback is important include: the employee was part of a workgroup headed by another agency manager or staff lead, or the employee was on a rotational assignment or a detail.
- Provide written documentation if performance on any element is less than Fully Successful, including specific deficiencies and steps needed to bring performance to Fully Successful including reference to unsuccessful efforts made during the performance period if appropriate.
- Discuss any training and/or developmental needs.

The supervisor and the employee will sign and retain a copy of the progress review.

Remember to let the employee give input about his performance.



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#### Preparation for the Progress Review

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Supervisors should prepare for the mid-year review by:

- Making sure they have assessed and documented employee progress against the performance standards throughout the rating cycle.
- Plan to cover the following:
  - ◆ Purpose of the meeting
  - ◆ Organizational strategic mission, goals, and objectives
  - ◆ The connection between the employee's performance and the success of the organization
  - ◆ Opportunity for the employee to discuss his or her performance
  - ◆ A review of positive contributions to the work unit and areas for improvement
  - ◆ Any additional areas, such as career development, ideas the employee might have about improving the efficiency and effectiveness towards meeting the goals of the agency, or plans that the organization has that will affect the employee.

When conducting the progress review, remember to be constructive, even when providing negative input to the employee.



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### Conducting a Progress Review

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Read the following question or statement, and respond by selecting one option. When you're through, click the submit button to score the question.

**At the progress review, the emphasis of the discussion should be on a rating.**

- ☐ True
- ☒ False

Correct.

**Submit**



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The progress review is an opportunity for the supervisor to provide the employee with feedback of their performance and how it fits in with the goals and objectives of the organization. It also provides the employee a chance to discuss his or her own performance and express any ideas about improving the work of the unit.

The emphasis of the progress review should be on employee progress rather than on a rating. No actual rating is given at this time.



During review discuss  
how performance affects  
organizational goals.

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As a federal supervisor, you will undoubtedly have situations in which an employee is **not** meeting the performance standards during the rating period. This is a situation that you hope to correct before the annual appraisal. You have a variety of options at your disposal, ranging from general counseling or coaching to placing an employee on a performance improvement plan (PIP). The PIP may be required by your agency before you can take more formal action, such as reassignment, demotion, or removal.

There are several actions you can take to improve an employee's performance and avoid the process of giving an employee a less than a Fully Successful performance rating at the end of the year. These include:

- **Offer or require additional training** - Formal classroom or self-paced training
- **Provide on-the-job training** - Informal training on the job from the supervisor or peer employees
- **Provide job aids** - Documentation of how to perform specific tasks or checklists to ensure that tasks are completed correctly
- **Remove any obstacles to successful performance** - There may be things that can be done to make it easier for the employee to succeed
- **Provide closer supervision** - More frequent meetings with the employee to assess progress and provide direction
- **Communicate job expectations and requirements clearly** - Written instruction clearly describing what is expected

Each of these actions has value depending on the situation and what you are trying to accomplish.



Deal with performance problems right away—don't wait for annual review!

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Actions you can take to improve an employee's performance and avoid the process of giving an employee a less than a fully successful performance rating at the end of the year include:

- Additional training
- On-the-job training
- Job aids
- Removing any obstacles to successful performance
- Closer supervision
- Communicating job expectations and requirements more clearly



Deal with performance problems as quickly as possible; don't wait until the end of the rating period.

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Preparing and presenting annual appraisals to their employees is a stressful activity for most supervisors, but it can become a positive experience that can lead to improved performance for individuals and their organizations if it is done properly.

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At the conclusion of the appraisal cycle, the OPDIV, in consultation with the ASAM Office of Human Resources (OHR) will issue guidance and timelines for the completion of the annual employee evaluations and the submission of performance award nominations. Appraisal process guidance issued by the OPDIV will be consistent with all instructions, procedures, and requirements set forth in these instructions and will not place quantitative limits on the number of ratings at any given rating level. The OPDIV appraisal process guidance will be communicated to all OPDIV staff.

Between January 1 and February 15 of each year, the rating official will meet with the employee to discuss the rating of record and, if applicable, any needed improvement assistance.



Review your  
notes and allow  
employee to  
prepare.

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#### Summary Rating

The rating official provides his/her own assessment of the employee's performance during the rating period under the written performance plan and requirements. The rating official rates each element, unless the employee did not have a reasonable opportunity to perform a particular element for the minimum period (90 calendar days) during the rating period (in which case the element will be marked "Not Applicable").

A written narrative may be prepared, but is not required, for Fully Successful and Exceptional ratings. For rating below Fully Successful, the rating official must prepare a written assessment of an employee's overall performance, in support of the rating of record, including identification of specific performance deficiencies. Page 3 of the form will be used for this purpose. If an employee's performance is Unacceptable, the supervisor must, at a minimum, give written notice to the employee of his or her failure to demonstrate acceptable performance and give the employee an opportunity to demonstrate acceptable performance under a Performance Improvement Plan (PIP). Supervisors will consult with the servicing Human Resources Center or Office for assistance in dealing with unacceptable performance.

This system does not require a second level review of the rating. However, at the discretion of the OPDIV Head, the rating official may submit the rating to the reviewing official for concurrence prior to providing the rating to the employee. A second-level review is required if the rating is Unacceptable.

When the appraisal form is presented to the employee, the rating official will conduct a performance discussion. The employee will be asked to sign and date the appraisal form. Signing does not mean that the employee agrees with its content. In those instances where the employee declines to sign the appraisal form upon receipt of the rating of record, the rating official will indicate such in the appropriate section of the form. The employee will be provided with a copy of the complete final summary rating.

#### Method for Deriving Summary Ratings

Each employee's performance will be appraised by the rating official at least annually based on a comparison of actual performance with the written critical elements and the performance standards that constitute the performance plan. The rating official must also consider guidance provided by the Assistant Secretary for Administration and Management concerning the impact of organizational assessments on individual performance ratings.

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The following guidance will be followed in determining an overall summary rating:

A rating will be assigned to each critical element (Administrative Requirements and the individual critical elements under the Individual Performance Outcomes). This rating will be based upon the extent to which the employee's performance met one of the rating level definitions (Exceptional, Fully Successful, Minimally Successful, and Unacceptable).

The rating level definitions will be assigned a numerical score as follows:

Exceptional: 5 points  
Fully Successful: 3 points  
Minimally Successful: 2 points  
Unacceptable: 1 point

After rating and assigning a score to each critical element, the rating official will total the points and divide by the number of critical elements, to arrive at an average score (up to one decimal place). This score will be converted to a summary rating based on the following point values:

Exceptional: 4.4 to 5 points  
Fully Successful: 3 to 4.3 points  
Minimally Successful: 2 to 2.9 points  
Unacceptable: 1 to 1.9 points

[See Examples of Calculating Summary Rating here](#)

Exceptions to the mathematical formula:

If an employee receives Minimally Successful on one or more critical elements, he/she cannot receive a summary rating of higher than Fully Successful, regardless of the average point score.

A summary rating of Unacceptable must be assigned to any employee who is rated Unacceptable on any critical element.

A rating of "Unacceptable" on any critical element leads to a summary rating of "Unacceptable".



# Example of Calculating the Summary Rating

Administrative  
Requirements

Administrative Element

Fully Successful

=

3 points

Individual  
Performance  
Outcomes

Performance Outcome 1

Exceptional

=

5 points

Performance Outcome 2

Exceptional

=

5 points

Performance Outcome 3

Fully Successful

=

3 points

Performance Outcome 4

Fully Successful

=

3 points

## SCORING GUIDE:

E: 4.4 to 5 points

FS: 3 to 4.3 points

MS: 2 to 2.9 points

U: 1 to 1.9 points

Total Number of Points

19 points

Total Number of Elements

5 elements

Numerical Summary Rating Score:

3.8

Overall Summary Rating:

Fully Successful

[Click here to close](#)



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Read the following question or statement, and respond by selecting one option. When you're through, click the submit button to score the question.

**An employee has four critical elements in her performance plan and was rated as "Exceptional" on two elements and "Fully Successful" on the other two, giving her a total score of 16. What will her summary rating be?**

- ☐ A. Exceptional
- ☒ B. Fully Successful
- ☐ C. Minimally Successful
- ☐ D. Unacceptable

Correct.

**Submit**

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Read the following question or statement, and respond by selecting one option. When you're through, click the submit button to score the question.

**An employee has five critical elements and was rated as "Fully Successful" on four of them and "Unacceptable" on one, giving her a total score of 13. What is the employee's summary rating?**

- ☐ A. Exceptional
- ☐ B. Fully Successful
- ☐ C. Minimally Successful
- ☒ D. Unacceptable

Correct.

**Submit**

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#### Rating of Record

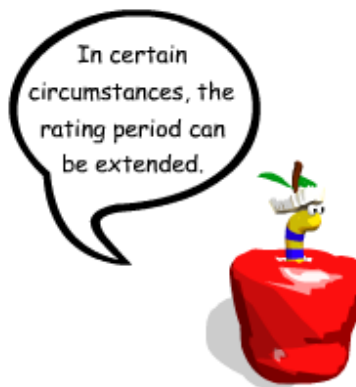
A summary rating prepared at the end of the appraisal period will become the rating of record. A summary rating may also be prepared prior to the end of the appraisal cycle, e.g., where the employee is reassigned to another position or when the supervisor leaves his/her position. This summary rating will be considered by the rating official in preparing an end-of-the-cycle rating of record. If there are less than 90 days prior to the end of the appraisal cycle, this summary rating will become the rating of record.

#### Extending the Appraisal Period

The rating period will be extended if the employee has performed for more than 45 days, but less than 90 days, under a plan (i.e., one-half the minimum appraisal cycle) prior to the end of the appraisal cycle. For example, if a performance plan is established for an employee on November 1, there would be more than 45 days left in the appraisal cycle, which ends on December 31. In this case, the appraisal period would be extended until January 31, to allow for a full 90-day period on which to base the appraisal.

The rating period will not be extended if the employee has performed less than 45 days under a plan (i.e., one-half the minimum appraisal cycle) prior to the end of the appraisal cycle. For example, if a performance plan is established for an employee after November 15, there would be less than 45 days prior to the end of the appraisal cycle, December 31. In this case, the employee would not receive a rating for that cycle.

If the employee was issued a summary rating for another position within HHS, or under another supervisor within HHS, earlier in the performance year, that summary rating will become the rating of record if the employee has not worked under a performance plan in the new position for at least 90 days.



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In presenting the annual performance appraisal, supervisors should:

- If employees were **not** required to provide prior written input, give them the opportunity at the beginning of the meeting **before** giving them their final rating. This gives you the opportunity to consider their input before presenting the rating.
- Discuss both positive and negative performance. Don't focus solely on problem areas.
- Review each performance element with the employee. You should justify each element as well as the final rating with the employee.
- Complete the required forms and obtain the necessary signatures to include the reviewing official (the supervisor's superior), if required by the STAFFDIV/OPDIV Head.
- Make sure the employee is aware that this is a 2-way, interactive discussion.

#### Disagreement with the Rating

Employees are encouraged to discuss disagreements with the supervisor/rating official and the reviewing official (if required by the OPDIV Head) in an attempt to resolve the issue informally. If the employee disagrees with the rating of record, the rating official must advise the employee of his/her right to respond in writing to the rating. This response will be attached to the rating form, but it will not change the rating assigned by the rating official. An employee may also file a grievance through the DHHS or OPDIV grievance procedures, as applicable. An employee may pursue EEO complaint procedures, if he/she believes the rating is based on prohibited discrimination.



Try to resolve disagreements about appraisal informally.

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#### Coping with Negative Reactions

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When employees receive a lesser rating than what they expected, they are likely to react negatively and defensively. They may be passive or unresponsive, hurt, or angry. Here is an effective strategy to help you cope with negative reactions.

- **Listen to the employee**  
Listening does **not** necessarily mean agreeing with the employee; however, in many cases, the employee just wants his or her thoughts to be known.
- **Be empathetic and understanding**  
Even if you are the bearer of bad news, you can also help your employees to deal with it and accept it. The performance appraisal is **not** intended to be a reward and punishment process. It is intended to give employees an honest assessment of their performance and then for the supervisor to work with the employees to improve performance.
- **Deal with the issue**  
When employees challenge you to justify their ratings, reinforce your reasons for the rating with documentation.
- **Don't upgrade a rating merely to avoid conflict**  
Giving the wrong rating to avoid conflict will have a longer negative effect than giving a correct, but unpopular rating.
- **Develop an action plan with the employee for better ratings in the future**  
This is a problem-solving opportunity for you and the employee.
- **Don't argue with the employee if he or she decides to file a grievance**  
An employee has the right to file a grievance in most agencies regarding what he or she believes is an inaccurate rating.

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Read the following question or statement, and respond by selecting one or more options. When you're through, click the submit button to score the question.

**To determine the appropriate rating to give for each performance element, the supervisor should:**

- ☒ A. Review any notes on the employee's performance compiled during the rating period.
- ☒ B. Consult operational reports that show how well the employee performed against organizational standards.
- ☒ C. Solicit input from a sampling of the employee's customers.
- ☐ D. Compare employee against other employees.

Correct.

**Submit**

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Read the following question or statement, and respond by selecting one option. When you're through, click the submit button to score the question.

**Which of the following is an example of what you should do when coping with negative reactions during an employee review?**

- ☐ A. Agree with the employee
- ☐ B. Argue with the employee
- ☐ C. Use the review to only point out deficiencies
- ☒ D. Show the employee the evidence you accumulated

Correct.

**Submit**



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The annual performance appraisal is the time for the supervisor to:

- Encourage the employee to improve performance, knowledge, or capabilities
- Review employee input
- Assign an employee his or her final rating

During the appraisal, it is important for the supervisor to:

- Encourage the employee to improve performance, knowledge, or capabilities
- Learn about the employee's goals for the upcoming year
- Let the employee know how their role fits into the organization in the coming year, and discuss any changes or challenges expected.

The performance appraisal is **not** intended to be a reward and punishment process, but is intended to give employees an honest assessment of their performance. Remember, an employee has the right to file a grievance in most agencies if he or she believes they received an inaccurate rating.



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### Rater Errors

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It is important for a supervisor to be accurate, consistent, and fair when assigning performance ratings.

The kinds of errors that rating officials make usually fall into one of the following categories:

- Rating the employee against other employees rather than against the requirements of the position
- Letting one or two events, either positive or negative, that took place during the appraisal period, drive the entire rating
- Personal prejudice or bias, based on common backgrounds between the supervisor and employee
- Overrating the value of recent events and overlooking the value of events that took place earlier in the performance rating period
- Determining the rating you want to give in advance then figuring out how to complete the appraisal in order to get the desired predetermined rating.

Being aware  
of rater errors  
can help you  
avoid them.



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### Rater Errors

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#### Case Study

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Julia is one of several analysts that work for Marsha. Julia completes her reports on time and rarely needs to revise her data. Several of the other analysts that work for Marsha are frequently late with their reports and often need to make major revisions to correct mistakes. Marsha thinks that Julia should receive a rating of "Exceptional" on her critical element for completing reports.

Read the following question or statement, and respond by selecting one option. When you're through, click the submit button to score the question.

**Which error is Marsha committing?**

- ☒ A. Rating the employee against other employees
- ☐ B. Letting one or two events drive the entire rating
- ☐ C. Personal prejudice or bias
- ☐ D. Overrating the value of recent events

Correct.

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An accurate, fair appraisal results in higher employee morale and increased effectiveness. Supervisors should be aware of some common errors that can affect the objectivity of the employee appraisal.

Common errors made by supervisors when rating employees can be avoided by:

- Rating the employee against the requirements of the position
- Basing the rating on the entire appraisal period
- Keeping personal feelings about the employee aside
- Rating events that occurred during the appraisal period on an even scale
- **Not** writing the appraisal to a predetermined rating

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Successful individual employee accomplishments and contributions enable organizations to meet goals, and will be considered when determining and assigning final ratings, conferring recognition and rewards, identifying potential training and developmental needs, and planning future assignments. This section details the actions that stem from these ratings.

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#### Actions Based on Exceptional Performance

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Performance awards are an integral part of the performance appraisal process. As such, they are tied to the rating of record, and submitted and considered for approval only at the conclusion of the rating period. The following actions may be taken based on "Exceptional" performance:

- Employees entitled to performance award payment of between 2.5 percent and 5 percent of salary, including locality payment or special rate supplement (as of the last day of the rating period [December 31]), subject to funds availability within the OPDIV, STAFFDIV or Office.
- Employees may request to convert the cash award amount of the performance award into time-off equivalent, not to exceed an aggregate calendar year total of 40 hours time off. Any remaining cash balance will be paid out in cash.
- Employees receiving an Exceptional rating are also eligible for a Quality Step Increase (QSI). However, employees will not receive both a QSI and a cash award for the same performance.



Exceptional performers may get up to 5% of their salary in a performance award.

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#### Actions Based on Fully Successful Performance

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Like employees rated as "Exceptional," employees whose performance is "Fully Successful" may be eligible for a performance award. The following actions may be taken based on a summary rating of "Fully Successful:"

- At the discretion of the OPDIV, a performance award of up to 2 percent of salary, including locality payment or special rate supplement (as of the last day of the rating period [December 31]), subject to funds availability. **However, all employees rated Exceptional must be paid "in full" first.**
- Employees may choose to convert the cash award amount of the performance award into time-off equivalent, not to exceed an aggregate calendar year total of 40 hours time off. Any remaining cash balance will be paid out in cash.

Employees who receive "Fully Successful" ratings are not eligible for a Quality Step Increase, since performance must be rated at the highest rating available (i.e., "Exceptional") and exhibit performance at a sustained level which is significantly above the "Fully Successful" level. Employees who receive "Minimally Successful" or "Unacceptable" ratings are not eligible for performance rating-based cash awards or Quality Step Increases.

**NOTE:** OPDIVs may also exercise existing authorities to provide employee recognition for short-term accomplishments using other award types, including, but not limited to, Special Act/Special Service Awards, and Time-Off Awards, as appropriate.



Fully Successful employees may get up to 2% of salary in a performance award.

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The “Minimally Successful” level describes performance that is adequate for retention in the position. Supervisors are strongly encouraged to closely monitor an employee who is rated “Minimally Successful” and to offer any assistance needed to bring the employee’s performance to the “Fully Successful” level. Employees who receive a “Minimally Successful” rating are not eligible to receive a within-grade increase. Supervisors should consult with the servicing Human Resources Center or Office for assistance in dealing with Minimally Successful performance.



## Performance Reviews

### Using Performance Results

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#### Actions Based on Unacceptable Performance

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If performance on any critical element is determined to be "Unacceptable" at any time during the rating period, the supervisor will provide assistance to help the employee improve performance to an acceptable ("Minimally Successful") level. The supervisor must, at a minimum, give written notice to the employee of his or her failure to demonstrate acceptable performance and give the employee an opportunity to demonstrate acceptable performance under a Performance Improvement Plan (PIP). This written notification must include the following:

1. The specific element(s) on which the employee's performance is determined to be unacceptable, including specific examples of how the employee's performance fails to meet this level of performance;
2. The performance requirement(s) that must be met;
3. The specific assistance that will be provided to help the employee improve performance;
4. The specific period of time the employee will be given to demonstrate acceptable performance; and
5. Notification that actions may be initiated to reassign, reduce in grade, or remove the employee if performance does not improve to the Minimally Successful level.

Supervisors will consult with the servicing Human Resources Center or Office for assistance in dealing with unacceptable performance.



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### Using Performance Results

#### Practice Activity 1

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Read the following question, and answer it by selecting one option. When you're through, click the submit button to score the question.

**Only employees who have a rating of "Exceptional" are eligible for a Quality Step Increase.**

- ☒ True  
☐ False

Correct.

**Submit**

## Performance Reviews

### Using Performance Results

#### Practice Activity 2

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Read the following question, and answer it by selecting one option. When you're through, click the submit button to score the question.

**An employee with a rating of “Fully Successful” is entitled to a performance award of up to 5 percent of her salary.**

- ☐ A. True
- ☒ B. False

Correct.

**Submit**

## Performance Reviews

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Conducting performance reviews includes the elements of:

- Communicating expectations
- Monitoring employees
- Providing feedback
- Documenting
- Recognizing and motivating
- Conducting progress and annual performance reviews

Managing performance is a key activity by which supervisors assure that organizational success is achieved through employee success. Supervisors who are proficient in using the performance management system effectively, giving feedback, and dealing with performance issues are more effective. An effective performance management system will result in a better-managed organization, higher employee morale, and increased effectiveness and efficiency of the federal workforce.

It's important for supervisors to remember that performance appraisals affect a variety of personnel actions in the federal government. That is why it is important to develop and implement high-quality performance standards and provide quality feedback to employees.

## Performance Reviews

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### Post-Test

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#### Instructions

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Next, you must answer post-test questions. You will have one chance to answer each question. **The post-test will take approximately 10 minutes.** Do not start unless you're sure you can finish.

## Performance Reviews

### Post-Test

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#### Question 1

Read the following question or statement, and respond by selecting one or more options. When you're through, click the submit button to score the question.

At what point in the performance management process should supervisors talk to employees about how they are performing?

- ☐ A. Performance planning
- ☒ B. Performance updates
- ☒ C. Annual performance appraisals

Correct

**Next Question**

## Performance Reviews

### Post-Test

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#### Question 2

Read the following question or statement, and respond by selecting one or more options. When you're through, click the submit button to score the question.

Listen to employees when they respond to your questions, since their responses will help you write standards that are:

- ☒ A. Relevant
- ☒ B. Understandable
- ☒ C. Measurable
- ☒ D. Objective

Correct

**Next Question**



## Performance Reviews

### Post-Test

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#### Question 3

Read the following question or statement, and respond by selecting one option. When you're through, click the submit button to score the question.

Viewing it as a problem-solving opportunity for both you and the employee, is what characteristic of effective feedback?

- ☐ A. Timely
- ☐ B. Specific
- ☒ C. Constructive
- ☐ D. Informative

Correct

**Next Question**

## Performance Reviews

### Post-Test

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#### Question 4

Read the following question or statement, and respond by selecting one option. When you're through, click the submit button to score the question.

Input on how employees are performing can come from customers, peers, internal clients, and external clients.

- ☒ A. True
- ☐ B. False

Correct

**Next Question**

## Performance Reviews

### Post-Test

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#### Question 5

Read the following question or statement, and respond by selecting one option. When you're through, click the submit button to score the question.

A travel assistant, working with an international traveler, was overheard saying that they have no idea how the individual would go about applying for a passport. What should the supervisor do?

- ☐ A. Counsel on what not to tell customers.
- ☒ B. Provide a job aid.
- ☐ C. Reassign them to a new job.
- ☐ D. Provide them with closer supervision.

Correct

**Next Question**

## Performance Reviews

### Post-Test

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#### Question 6

Read the following question or statement, and respond by selecting one option. When you're through, click the submit button to score the question.

The annual performance appraisal is the time for the supervisor to assign an employee his or her final rating.

- ☒ A. True
- ☐ B. False

Correct

**Next Question**

## Performance Reviews

### Post-Test

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#### Question 7

Read the following question or statement, and respond by selecting one option. When you're through, click the submit button to score the question.

In a three-level rating system, Frank notes that Julia clearly exceeded her performance standards on the quality, quantity, and timeliness of her work, but she still did not perform as well as Oliver, Kay, and Brian. Therefore, he gives Julia a rating of "fully successful" on the performance standard dealing with productivity and efficiency. Which error is Frank making?

- ☒ A. Rating the employee against other employees
- ☐ B. Letting one or two events drive the entire rating
- ☐ C. Personal prejudice or bias
- ☐ D. Overrating the value of recent events

Correct

[Next Question](#)

## Performance Reviews

### Post-Test

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#### Question 8

Read the following question or statement, and respond by selecting one or more options. When you're through, click the submit button to score the question.

Which of the following is true about progress reviews?

- ☐ A. Focus should be on ratings
- ☐ B. Supervisor should always provide a written narrative
- ☒ C. Training/development needs should be discussed
- ☒ D. Supervisor should discuss any changing priorities or assignments

Correct

**Next Question**

## Performance Reviews

### Post-Test

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#### Question 9

Read the following question or statement, and respond by selecting one or more options. When you're through, click the submit button to score the question.

Which of the following is true about summary ratings

- ☐ A. An element may be marked as "Not Applicable" if the employee did not perform the element for 120 days
- ☐ B. A second level review is necessary for all summary ratings
- ☒ C. A rating of "Unacceptable" on any critical element leads to a summary rating of "Unacceptable"

Correct

**Next Question**



## Performance Reviews

### Post-Test

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#### Question 10

Read the following question or statement, and respond by selecting one option. When you're through, click the submit button to score the question.

True or False: All performance awards for employees rated as "Exceptional" must be paid before any awards are paid for "Fully Successful" employees.

- ☒ A. True
- ☐ B. False

Correct

**Next Question**

## Performance Reviews

### Post-Test

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#### Question 11

Read the following question. Your answer choices are on the left with letter identifiers. Type the letter of your answer in the box next to the appropriate option on the right. When you're through, click the submit button to score the question.

**Match the action on the right with the performance level on the left that it is based upon.**

**A. Exceptional**

Employee is retained .

**B. Fully Successful**

Can get performance award, but not a Quality Step Increase.

**C. Minimally Successful**

May get a Quality Step Increase.

**D. Unacceptable**

Will get a PIP.

Correct.

**Next Question**

## Performance Reviews

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### Post-Test

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### Summary of Results

If you have viewed every screen of the "Performance Review" module, you have successfully completed this module of the training. Please be sure to close this window to register completion of this module. Please be sure you have also completed the "Performance Planning" module of this training in order to receive credit for completion of the entire PMAP Supervisory training course.